



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass 2016 Recreational Management Measures

Effective Date: Upon Publication in the Federal Register

We have approved the final 2016 minimum fish size, angler possession limits, and fishing season rules for the summer flounder (fluke), scup (porgies), and black sea bass (sea bass) recreational fisheries. States have already put their rules in place for the season.

We are again implementing “conservation equivalency” for the **summer flounder** fishery. Conservation equivalency means that we have waived the Federal recreational bag limit, minimum fish size, and fishing season, and vessel owners are subject only to regulations in their state. Please see **Table 1**, below, for your state’s 2016 recreational management measures.

We are also maintaining the **year-round** open season for recreational **scup** fishing, the minimum fish size is still **9 inches**, and the per person per trip possession limit is still **50 scup per person**. Please keep in mind that, if the Federal minimum size, possession limit, and/or season differ from the regulations for the state in which you will be landing, you must follow the more restrictive regulations. **Please contact your state for information on your state’s scup regulations.**

For the 2016 **black sea bass** recreational fishery, we are maintaining the minimum fish size of **12.5 inches** and the possession limit of **15 black sea bass per person per trip**. The 2015 Federal open seasons are **May 15-September 21** and **October 22-December 31** in Federal waters. Please keep in mind that, if the Federal minimum size, possession limit, and/or season differ from the regulations for the state in which you will be landing, you must follow the more restrictive regulations. **Please contact your state for information on your state’s black sea bass regulations.**

We have also included some important information regarding sea turtles and what you should do if you encounter or entangle a sea turtle on **Page 3**.

If you have additional questions on the recreational management measures after reading this letter, please call the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315. For questions related to sea turtles, please call the Protected Resources Division at (978) 281-9238.

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Greater Atlantic Region.

Table 1: 2016 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Approved Conservation Equivalent Recreational Measures for Summer Flounder

State	Minimum Size (inches)	Possession Limit	Open Season
Massachusetts	16	5 fish	May 22-September 23
Rhode Island	18	8 fish	May 1-December 31
Connecticut	18	5 fish	May 17- September 21
CT shore program (46 designed shore sites)	16		
New York	18	5 fish	May 17- September 21
New Jersey*	18	5 fish	May 21- September 25
NJ Shore program site	16	2 fish	May 21-September 25
New Jersey/Delaware Bay	17	4 fish	May 21-September 25
Delaware	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
Maryland	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
PRFC	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
Virginia	16	4 fish	January 1- December 31
North Carolina	15	6 fish	January 1- December 31

*New Jersey east of the COLREGS line at Cape May, NJ will have management measures consistent with the northern region of Connecticut – New York.

**New Jersey west of the COLREGS line at Cape May, NJ inside Delaware Bay will have a similar size limit to the southern region (DE-VA), the same possession limit as the southern region (DE-VA), and the same season Northern region of Connecticut – New York.

Table 2: 2016 Federal Recreational Measures for Scup and Black Sea Bass

Remember—the most restrictive measures apply, based on the rules for the state where you land.

Fishery	Minimum Size (Inches)	Possession Limit	Open Season
Scup	9 inches	50 fish	January 1-December 31
Black Sea Bass	12.5 inches	15 fish	May 15-September 21 October 22-December 31

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON SEA TURTLES

Sea Turtles and Recreational Hook-and-Line Fishing

Five sea turtle species - green, hawksbill (rare visitor to our region), Kemp's ridley, leatherback, and loggerhead turtles - are found in the U.S. Atlantic Ocean. All of these turtles are threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

When on the water, please keep a watch for sea turtles and aggregations of jellyfish, which are leatherback prey. Sea turtles can be accidentally entangled or hooked in fishing gear. Requirements for handling sea turtles and/or resuscitating comatose turtles can be found at 50 CFR 223.206(d)(1). In addition, follow the recommendations below to reduce injuries if you entangle or hook a sea turtle.

1. First, call your local stranding network responder (http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/stranding/ST%20map/), the **USCG on Channel 16**, or NOAA Fisheries Marine Animal Hotline at **866-755-NOAA(6622)**.
2. Safety First! Keep your hands away from the turtle's mouth and flippers.

While waiting for the responder:

3. Secure the turtle.
 - a. If fishing from a pier or land, use a net or lift by the shell to bring the turtle on the pier or land. DO NOT lift by the hook or by pulling on the line. If the turtle is too large to net or lift, try to walk it to the beach.
 - b. If fishing from a vessel and the turtle is small enough to lift safely, use a dip net or lift by the shell to bring the turtle on board.
4. When you have control of the sea turtle, use blunt scissors or a knife to cut the line. Leave at least 2 ft of line to allow for dehooking by trained responders.
5. Leave the hook in place as removing it could cause more harm.
6. Keep the turtle out of direct sunlight, and cover the shell with a damp towel. If on land, wait for the response team to arrive. If on the water, please follow the instructions you receive from the response team.
7. If you cannot reach the response team and are unable to bring the turtle to shore or on your vessel, cut the line as short as possible before releasing the turtle.
8. When returning a sea turtle to the water, it must be released over the stern of the boat when fishing gear is not in use, the engine gears are in the neutral position, and in areas where it is unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels.

Please also report any sea turtles or large whales that are injured, entangled in other gear, stranded on the beach, or floating dead to the USCG on Channel 16 or the NOAA hotline at 866-755-NOAA(6622). For more information, please contact our Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328. We appreciate all your help!